



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Tom Horne

Superintendent of
Public Instruction

January 17, 2003

Dear Superintendent/Administrator:

Subject: NCLB 03-03 - Paraprofessional Testing

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) imposes upon all instructional paraprofessionals in Title I programs employed prior to January 8, 2002, certain minimum qualifications to be met by January 8, 2006. One of the three options* to meet those qualifications is to demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to instruct reading, mathematics, and writing through a formal assignment. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) has recognized the *ParaPro* Test, developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), as an option for Arizona's Title I paraprofessionals to meet this requirement. ETS has begun offering paper and pencil test sessions in Arizona, beginning January 11. Future test dates are scheduled for March 8, April 26, and June 28 at the three state universities. Special registration options are available for test takers with disabilities. For all registration requirements, deadlines, and specific test site information, visit the ETS web site at www.ets.org/parapro.

For the first time ETS is offering an Internet-based Delivery System for the *ParaPro* test. LEAs are invited to visit the ETS web site and select the item marked "Internet-based Assessment" for:

- An excerpt from the *ParaPro* Administrative Manual with information for selecting and preparing a good testing environment,
- *Technical Tips* for preparing the computers intended for the assessment delivery, and
- Contact information in the event that a district has difficulty initializing their accounts

Using the on-line testing option, your paraprofessionals will be able to test on a schedule determined by the LEA and perhaps more convenient to your paraprofessionals. The on-line test taker receives an immediate score as well as a written confirmation from ETS.

The passing score on the *ParaPro* test for Arizona will be based on the scores of the approximately 230 participants from Arizona in the pilot of *ParaPro* conducted last September. Earlier this month ETS convened a group of Arizona paraprofessional and teachers who supervise paraprofessionals to determine that passing score. The ADE expects to announce the results of that process in early February.

All information on *ParaPro* is available on the ETS web site. You can obtain a registration bulletin that contains registration forms and information by e-mail to ETS at parapro@ets.org or by calling 609-771-7395 and following the recorded instructions.

The ADE has had numerous inquiries about the testing of paraprofessionals. A summary of responses to the most frequently asked questions follows:

1. LEAs may use federal funds – Titles I or II or V - to pay for or reimburse **employees** to take the test. Applicants for paraprofessional positions since January 8, 2002, must demonstrate that they have met the requirements **prior to being hired**, so it is the responsibility of those individuals to pay for the test, if that is the option they choose. Recruitment activities funded with Title II-A must be directed toward hiring highly qualified teachers and/or principals, not paraprofessionals.
2. An individual may re-take the test as often as needed. ETS suggests an interval of at least 30 days between test sessions. LEA policy can determine how many times it will pay test fees.
3. Individuals who do not pass the test may still perform their classroom instructional duties as defined by NCLB. They have until the January 8, 2006, deadline to meet any one of the options*.
4. Recognizing that there may be individuals who are unsuccessful with a multiple choice test such as *ParaPro*, the ADE anticipates it will recognize tests currently under development by other national testing companies that provide different testing formats.
5. LEAs have the option to develop their own test, should they choose to do so. They should be aware of the need to satisfy the standard of “rigor” required by NCLB and that other LEAs are not required to accept results of a locally developed test.
6. The ADE will not be issuing a universal “certificate” for paraprofessionals who meet the requirements. Individuals will be required to maintain supporting documents that, for example, may be required for submittal with applications for employment. Personnel records at the LEA should reflect the status of the paraprofessionals and should be readily available for review by the ADE upon request.

Please contact me by e-mail at rromreo@ade.az.gov or at 602-542-7462, if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Ralph Romero, C.P.M.
Deputy Associate Superintendent
Academic Support Division

cc: NCLB Coordinator
Human Resources Department

* All Title I paraprofessionals must have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. Additionally, Title I paraprofessionals whose duties include instructional support and who were hired after January 8, 2002, must have

- (1) completed two years of study at an institution of higher education;
- (2) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or
- (3) met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness) [section 1119(c) and (d)].

Paraprofessionals hired on or before January 8, 2002 and working in a program supported with Title I funds must meet these requirements by January 8, 2006.